

As we approach the holidays, I would like to take the opportunity to recognize the many brave men and women who are serving our nation through Operation Iraqi Freedom and other domestic and international military missions.

Throughout our nation's history, our service men and women have dedicated themselves to defending this country and advancing global democracy. Their sacrifices have been instrumental in securing and protecting the many freedoms we enjoy as citizens of the world's most eminent democracy.

In order to assure that our government is meeting its obligations to our soldiers, I have signed on as a co-sponsor of H.R.515, Assured Funding for Veterans Health Care Act. This bill seeks to increase funding made available to the Department of Veterans Affairs for health related services.

This increase in funding could be beneficial to treating veterans currently living with one of the most significant mental health issues that have attracted much recent attention: post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). A psychiatric disorder that can develop as a result of military combat or other stressful events, PTSD has many biological and psychological symptoms. These symptoms, which may include depression, substance abuse, memory loss, and other problems with behavior and cognition, can affect the quality of a service member's life and also the lives of their family and loved ones. Although symptoms can go unnoticed for years, awareness and early detection of PTSD is important to mental and social health. For more information on PTSD, you may visit the following websites:

The National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) <http://www.ncptsd.va.gov/>

Palo Alto Health Care System <http://www1.va.gov/directory/guide/facility.asp?ID=104>

As always, my office is available for any casework issues you may have that are related to your veterans benefits and military service.

For additional information on other services and resources for veterans, you may also contact Richard Herrera at the Santa Clara County Office of Veterans Affairs, 68 North Winchester Blvd., Santa Clara, CA 95050. The office can be reached by telephone at (408) 553-6000 or by fax at (408) 553-6016.

Happy Holidays, Mike